

University of Hawai'i Foundation **Heritage Society**

PRESERVING HERITAGE COLLECTIONS

Lecture by Lynn Davis

Friday, February 13, 1998 Hamilton Library

THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA LIBRARY AT NINETY

In February 1908 the library of the new College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts of the Territory of Hawai'i opened to five students in the parlor of a frame house on Young Street, the College's first home. The collection held an atlas, a dictionary and the *Encyclopedia Americana*. In September, the first librarian, Caroline Green, spent \$4.50 on the first recorded purchase, from Honolulu bookseller E. Herrick Brown & Co. Henry Sidgwick's *Principles of Political Economy* (3rd ed., 1901) was a sound choice, as students still borrow it today (in the form of a 1968 reprint).

Within a year, the library had spread into the rest of the house. Helped by the Board of Agriculture and the Hawai'i Experiment Station, the library established its core book and journal collection. A separate Hawaiiana bookcase was filled with titles given by the Hawaiian Historical Society or purchased on the society's advice. Without assistants, Green was swamped by federal government documents arriving after the College was made a depository. Obligated also to operate the campus bookstore, she struggled to expend her federal book funds before they lapsed, only to find Governor Freear diverting her territorial funds to meet shortages in other government departments.

Students crowded the tables, studying and socializing. Faculty meetings, classes and public lectures were conducted in the reading room, which was frequently overwhelmed by cooking smells from the janitor's kitchen as his family lived on the premises. In spite of the conditions, the scientific community and the public soon discovered the value of the resources and were included among the growing number of borrowers. By 1911 the library was mailing books to readers all over the territory and had a small traveling library making the rounds in cooperation with the Department of Public Instruction. In August 1912, the collection of 9,000 books, an equal number of pamphlets and about 100 periodicals underwent its first move: to the first floor of Hawai'i Hall on the Manoa campus.

Thus were the seeds of the future sown. After four more moves, nine head librarians and 90 years, the UHM Library is one of the University's and the state's most enduring assets and the 41st largest research library in the nation. Soon to add its three millionth volume, it continues strong in agricultural and other sciences and holds the state's most comprehensive Hawaiiana resources. Its outstanding Asia and Pacific Collections reflect the expanding interests of our community in these vast regions. The library serves as the trusted steward of many significant gift collections, such as the Hawai'i War Records Depository and the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Plantation Archives, and as a major depository for state and federal documents. Library faculty and staff work cooperatively with local scholarly and research organizations to support their research needs and to share the riches with the community as well as the students and faculty of all UH System campuses.

Library holdings have expanded beyond manuscripts and print on paper to include sound, visual, and data recordings of many kinds. Still, the library's mission: acquiring, maintaining and providing access to our own collections and facilitating access to information beyond our walls has not changed. The library continues to provide assistance and education in information retrieval. Advances in information technology have changed the skills we teach to enable our users to draw from local holdings as well as globally networked electronic information resources. As our community members, faculty and students continue to produce their own creative and research works, they demonstrate that investment in the library pays many dividends in the advancement of knowledge.

Heritage collections—like those developed and cultivated over many years in the Special Collections at the UHM Library give voice to the history and lifestyles of Hawai'i's people. Through study and appreciation of such collections, students, scholars and members of the community discover the complexities of our island harmonies and divergences. To ensure that the richness of our cultural voices is heard now and also by future generations, the Preservation Department works to care for and stabilize these important resources. Individual items are prepared and treated following national preservation guidelines. Some are copied to alternative formats (e.g., digitized, microfilmed, photocopied) to meet the Library's preservation and access goals.

Our collections contain increasingly diverse physical formats, from traditional books and journals on paper to the latest audiovisual and electronic media. The department incorporates new technology into treatment strategies, designs preservation guidelines for all these formats and monitors their stability, especially the new electronic formats.

As the only library preservation facility in the state, the department is a significant partner in the University's ongoing stewardship of our island resources. Our outreach work with other libraries and archives statewide helps protect a collective investment in resources that educate, delight and excite people to learn more about themselves and their communities.

In the forthcoming addition to the Hamilton Library building, preservation concerns have been incorporated into the plans, for example in the provision of environmentally controlled spaces for housing the collections, new freezers to strengthen the pest management program and new quarters for the Preservation Department, which will incorporate a paper treatment laboratory. These new facilities will enhance the library's ability to provide leadership in the preservation of library and heritage collections.

Unique collections provide a mesmerizing glimpse into the past. Explore with Lynn Davis how primary source materials provide intimate and sometimes parallel perspectives of the same past event: for example, how daguerreotype portraits of Hawaiian chiefs are complemented by the mele (poetic portraits) written by and about them; how data gleaned from early census documents provide additional insights into the lives of Japanese immigrants whose first portraits in Hawaii are identity photographs mounted on labor contracts. Tour the Preservation Department and observe how the staff preserves collections, using various techniques to mend and strengthen worn or fragile materials.



LYNN DAVIS joined the library as head of the Preservation Department in November 1996. She was born and raised on O'ahu, and lives in her family home in Kane'ohe. After serving 20 years as chairman of the Bishop Museum Archives, which also included responsibility for the photograph and visual collections, she has considerable knowledge of and hands-on experience in preserving cultural and library resources in our challenging tropical environment. Lynn did her undergraduate work at UHM (1970), completed an MLS at Manoa (1972) and earned her MA in art from the University of New Mexico (1984). Historical images of old Hawai'i are her particular passion. She has published articles and books on this subject, including *Na Pa'i Ki'i: Photographers in Hawai'i, 1845-1900* (1980), and *A Photographer in the Kingdom: Christian J. Hedemann's Early Images of Hawai'i* (1987).